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ABSTRACT

A series of consultations between low-income women and representatives of local and State service agencies in the Department of Labor's ten regions was undertaken to examine the needs, issues, and circumstances that affect the employment opportunities of low-income women. Each central consultation was preceded by several smaller meetings, attended primarily by low-income women. A national seminar of representatives elected at each consultation was held to focus attention on the issues raised by the women at the regional meetings. Each region conducted the project with some variety in number and type of participants and issues raised. At the national seminar, held at the White House, concerns of transportation, the welfare system, child care, and discrimination were voiced to Federal administrators. The administrators responded with advice that women become a political power group in order to receive their share of dollars for programs. After the project's conclusion, follow-up activities in different regions attempted to work toward change in individual communities which would fulfill women's needs regarding information, employment, discrimination, welfare, transportation, language, health, and housing.
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Employment and Economic Issues of Low-Income Women: Report of a Project

U.S. Department of Labor
Ray Marshall, Secretary

Women's Bureau
Alexis Herman, Director

1978

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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FOREWORD

The Women's Bureau has become increasingly concerned about the difficulties experienced by women who live at or below the poverty level when they attempt to enter the labor market and become economically self-sufficient. Solutions to problems related to sex, race, and age discrimination; education; training; employment; health and medical care; the welfare system; housing; child care; and the availability of community resources must be found before a low-income woman can leave a life of poverty behind and take her place in America's economic mainstream. It is also important that these solutions be found at the local level where these women live and want to work.

The Bureau's project on Employment and Economic Issues of Low-Income Women provided a forum for low-income women to identify their problems and needs, and to learn about government and community programs that could assist them. The project was also successful in generating local coalitions and task forces of low-income women and community resource persons which were formed to work on solutions to the problems that had been identified. I hope this report will serve to stimulate further action.

ALEXIS M. HERMAN
Director, Women's Bureau

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INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a women's issue. It has become a women's issue because increasing proportions of women live at or below the poverty level,* and because child care responsibilities, lack of training for well-paid jobs, and discrimination hinder women's efforts to become economically self-sufficient.

Statistics continue to show a growing proportion of women among persons who live in poverty. In 1977, families headed by women accounted for 48 percent of all families in poverty, a significant increase from the 43 percent women represented of this group in 1967. In addition, a disproportionate number of children who are poor live in female-headed families. Fifty-five percent of all poor children lived in such families in 1977, compared with 38 percent 10 years earlier. In light of this trend toward increasing proportions of female-head families among families that live in poverty, the increasing numbers of female-headed families is also significant. In 1977, 7.7 million families had female heads. The percentage of families headed by women increased from 11 percent in 1967 to 14 percent in 1977.

The barriers facing women with low incomes or no incomes who attempt to lift themselves out of poverty are manifold. As women they encounter sex discrimination in seeking jobs and training opportunities, as well as sex stereotyping of occupations. If they are members of a minority group, the discrimination is doubled; and it is often multiplied again by language barriers and age. Some poor women lack a high school diploma or GED certificate, which is the first key to opening doors to good jobs. Many women have serious problems

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*The low-income or poverty level is based on the Bureau of the Census definition of poverty, adjusted annually in accordance with changes in the Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index. Classified as poor in 1976 were those nonfarm households where total money income was less than $2,884 for an unrelated individual, $3,711 for a couple, and $5,815 for a family of four. (The poverty level for farm families is set at 85 percent of the corresponding level for nonfarm families.)

with reliable transportation and child care arrangements. Low-income women also must cope with the frustration of being poor in a country of wealth, and with the psychological barriers that are frequently raised by their own past negative experiences.

The Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration, particularly through CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), has spent millions of dollars on programs to assist persons who are unemployed, underemployed, or otherwise economically disadvantaged, and many low-income women have benefited from these programs. Unfortunately, some women in these programs have encountered problems similar to those they experience in the open labor market, such as transportation and child care difficulties, and sex stereotyping of occupations which directs them into low paid "women's jobs." Not enough attention has been focused on the particular needs of low-income women and the problems they encounter in the labor market.

To examine these needs and the specific combinations of issues and circumstances that affect the employment opportunities and options of low-income women, the Women's Bureau obtained a grant from the Employment and Training Administration to undertake a project on Employment and Economic Issues of Low-Income Women. The project was funded in 1976, and the bulk of the work was completed in 1977. The three major objectives of the project were: (1) to obtain primary source information and confirmation of the problems and barriers that low-income women encounter in seeking satisfactory employment, (2) to seek more effective coordination of programs and delivery of services affecting low-income women at the local level, and (3) to bring identified issues to national attention.

THE PROJECT DESIGN

The basic design of the project was to hold a series of consultations in each of the Department of Labor's 10 regions that would bring low-income women together with representatives of agencies that deliver relevant services in the community. Each central consultation was to be preceded by several smaller "satellite" meetings which would be attended primarily by low-income women. A National Seminar of representatives elected at each consultation would be held to focus attention on the issues raised by the women at the regional meetings.

The Women's Bureau National Office had overall responsibility for content, policy, and budgetary supervision for the project. The chief of the Outreach Branch was the project director, and was responsible for the design and implementation of the project.

A National Coordinator was hired to assist the project director and to handle the day-to-day project work. The national coordinator managed the budget and worked closely with the Women's Bureau regional administrators and local consultants in designing and implementing the project work in the field.

Women's Bureau Regional Administrators supervised the project work in their regions, with the help of the local consultants. In most cases the regional administrator selected a task force of persons interested and concerned about the problems of low-income women who assisted in planning the consultation and who provided resources and support to the local consultant.

Local Consultants were hired to coordinate the consultations and satellite meetings for each project site. These consultants were persons who were active in their communities and familiar with community organizations, agencies, and service groups. In some cases they had been low-income women themselves. Their responsibilities included identifying and recruiting low-income women to participate in the satellite meetings, and contacting local agencies and organizations to participate in the central consultations. In most cases the local consultant was assisted by the Women's Bureau regional administrator and by the members of the local task force, who frequently organized satellite meetings and participated as resource persons or workshop leaders in the consultations.

A National Consultative Group assisted the Women's Bureau in the initial planning stages of the project and provided information and resources to the Bureau throughout the entire project. The consultative group reviewed plans; made suggestions on sites; recommended local consultants; and identified special ethnic, geographical, and social problems of interest and concern to the project planners. Members of this group included representatives of women's organizations and private agencies that work with low-income women. A list of the National Consultative Group members is included in appendix A.

A National Resource Group provided information and assistance on a continuing basis, both to the Women's Bureau national office project director and national coordinator, and to the regional administrators and local consultants. This Resource Group included representatives of Federal agencies, unions, and national organizations.

The Satellite Meetings were a crucial element in the success of the project because the primary objective was to find out about the women's economic and employment problems from the "real experts," low-income women. Particular efforts were made to reach women who were not ordinarily part of government or community activities, and to create the atmosphere of confidence necessary for these women to speak out openly about their problems and frustrations. As part of this effort, project consultants frequently contacted welfare offices, social service agencies, adult education centers, CETA and WIN programs, churches, and local organizations for information about women who might be interested in participating in the project. Many women were also reached through posters in shopping centers and coverage in local media.

The satellite meetings were held in accessible locations such as churches and community centers, and sometimes in women's homes. They were attended by low-income women, members of the local task forces and occasionally by Women's Bureau regional and national office staff. The meetings, which were attended by 6 to 22 women, were chaired by the local consultants.

In an informal atmosphere the women were able to get to know each other and were encouraged to discuss barriers to employment and to make recommendations for eliminating or minimizing the barriers they identified. Participants in each satellite meeting chose one or more representatives to speak for them at the central consultation.

The Central Consultations were formally structured and were usually held in hotel meeting rooms. They were attended by low-income women who were chosen at the satellite meetings,

representatives of private and public agencies and organizations that provide services in the community or State, local task force members, and Women's Bureau regional and national office staff. Efforts were made to include WIN (Work Incentive Program), CETA (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act), Employment Service, and welfare and social service agency staff in each central consultation. Local and State dignitaries, such as the Governor, the Mayor, members of Congress and the State legislature, and other prominent community leaders were also invited.

The central consultations were designed to create dialogue and continuing interaction among low-income women and local service agency staff persons. The consultations generally included a plenary session at which the low-income women representatives reported on issues discussed and recommendations made at the satellite meetings. Panels of local agency representatives and community resource persons were organized to explain programs and services available in the community, and to provide information about how to take advantage of these services. A question and answer period was an important part of each consultation, because it allowed the women an opportunity to voice their frustration with some agency staff members who deliver services inadequately, or with hostility or insensitivity. This question and answer period also helped agency staff to gain some perspective on the whole range of difficulties that confront low-income women.

Most consultations also divided participants into work groups which included low-income women, agency staff, and community resource persons. The work groups discussed specific issues in depth and formulated the recommendations which were to be presented at the National Seminar. In many cases, committees, task forces, or coalitions were formed at the work group sessions which continued to work on implementation of their recommendations in the community.

The interaction among agency staff, community organization members, and low-income women at the central consultations was also intended to help the women learn about the political process at the community level and the effect that political pressure can have upon programs designed for low-income persons. In addition, it was expected to stimulate the building of local coalitions to work for change, and information and resource networks to help other women find the services they need.

At each consultation a representative and an alternate were chosen to represent the participants and to present the recommendations of their sisters at the National Seminar which was to be held in Washington, D.C.

THE CONSULTATIONS

This section contains an account of how the project was conducted in each region. The original design provided for one central consultation in each region. However, in regions I and IV, local interest in an area with conditions significantly different from the first consultation site justified funding a second central consultation. In addition, a separate "Low-Income Women's Workshop" was funded to focus attention on the needs of women in Las Vegas.

REGION I - (Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)
Regional Administrator - Vivian Buckles
Consultants: Providence - Cecelia Dumas
New Bedford - Margo Volterra

Two central consultations were held in Region I, in Providence, Rhode Island, and in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The first consultation area was the State of Rhode Island. Satellite meetings were held in Newport, South Kingston (2), Woonsocket, Central Falls (2), and Providence. Rhode Island contains both rural and urban populations as well as isolated factory towns. The fact that it is a small State made it an ideal choice for a central consultation.

About 50 women participated in the project, most of whom were single parents who felt they had not been prepared either psychologically or practically to provide adequately for themselves. The women who were working held jobs in low paying dead end occupations in which few men are found. Transportation was a major concern to women in rural areas, while women who lived in isolated milltowns were primarily concerned about sex discrimination and equal pay in the factories. Welfare-related problems and criticism of government-sponsored employment and training programs dominated the meetings in Providence and Central Falls.

The central consultation was held in Providence on May 10, 1977. About 80 people attended, 25 of whom were low-income women. The consultation was actively supported by Rhode Island Governor J. Joseph Garrahy who addressed the morning session and told the women his door was open for them to

come and talk about their difficulties. State Senator Stephen Fortunato also spoke at the morning meeting as did the State directors of the Job Development and Training Administration and the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services.

Nine reports which summarized the problems that had surfaced at the satellite meetings were presented by the women who had been chosen to represent the satellite participants. These reports were particularly interesting because they included personal stories of some of the women who attended the meetings, while presenting the problems that were common to many of the women who had participated.

The afternoon session of the consultation broke up into 4 work groups on Welfare and Work Incentive Program; Education, Vocational Education and On-the-Job Training; Health and Age Discrimination; and CETA Opportunity and the Role of the Department of Employment Security. These work groups included low-income women, agency staff members, and community service organization members who discussed the work group topics and made general recommendations to be presented at the National Seminar and specific recommendations which could be carried out at the local level.

The second Region I central consultation was held in the New Bedford area of Southeastern Massachusetts. Fifteen satellite meetings were held in New Bedford and the nearby towns of Taunton and Fall River. This is an area that has experienced substantial and persistent unemployment for many years. Average wages are the lowest in Massachusetts, and average educational attainment is also very low. There is a large immigrant population, and low-income women's problems are often compounded by language barriers.

A task force of 15 representatives from government,industry, and the community worked closely with the local consultant and the regional administrator in planning and conducting the satellite meetings and the central consultation.

About 100 women participated in the New Bedford area satellite meetings. Among them were welfare recipients, CETA trainees, Head Start mothers, GED students, and union women. The major concerns of these women centered around government-sponsored programs such as WIN, CETA, and the welfare system; and employment problems related to lack of information about job options, lack of affirmative action enforcement, and lack of access to nontraditional jobs. The union women pointed out that, although working, they were still poor, and because they were working, they were not eligible for many services they needed. Child care facilities, transportation, housing, and health issues were also discussed.

The central consultation, titled "Policy Making With Women: Action on Low-Income Issues," was held on January 28, 1978. About 250 persons, including 70 low-income women and 40 rank and file union women attended the meeting. A plenary session provided the women an opportunity to address the issues identified at the satellite meetings from collective and personal perspectives, and to hear responses from representatives of agencies responsible for programs. In five workshops on Health, Unions, Welfare, CETA, and Education, consultation participants explored these issues in depth, and formulated recommendations for specific local action as well as general recommendations to be taken to the National Seminar.

REGION II (New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands)
Regional Administrator - Mary Tobin
Consultant - Angeline Allen

The Region II consultation area was Newark, New Jersey, and the nearby counties of Bergen, Hudson, Passaic, and Union. Seven satellite meetings were held in Hackensack, North Bergen, Passaic, Paterson, Plainfield, and Newark (2). The Newark area is highly urbanized, with all of the problems associated with large cities and urban ghettos. There are very large black and Puerto Rican populations. Unemployment is high, and relatively large numbers of persons live in poverty.

The local consultant organized the task force which assisted in the planning and implementation of the project. The 12 members of the task force lived in the areas designated for satellite meetings and were active in community organizations and activities. They were also directly involved in planning and conducting the satellite meetings in their own communities.

About 50 women participated in the satellite meetings, one of which was conducted in Spanish. Discussions at the meetings emphasized the problems that low-income women have in making ends meet financially, particularly those who are working in very low-paid jobs; the problems that Spanish-speaking women have in obtaining employment and finding out about available services in the community; the problems associated with withdrawal of benefits, such as child care and medicaid, upon becoming employed, which discourages welfare women from taking jobs; and the general lack of information about job opportunities, counseling services, and social services that are available in most New Jersey communities.

Over 125 persons attended the central consultation which was held in Newark on January 29, 1977. In the morning session, the representatives from the satellite meeting gave their reports and participants heard presentations by directors of two CETA-funded women's resource centers. These centers are funded under title III, Selected Population Grants, and place heavy emphasis on preparing women for entry into non-traditional jobs. These presentations sparked a great deal of interest in resource centers and funding.

The afternoon sessions addressed the principal issues raised at the satellite meetings: welfare, employment and training, and education. Representatives of the State Division of Public Welfare; and Division of Employment Services, State Department of Labor and Industry; the Director of Equal Education Opportunity, Office of Vocational Education; the New Jersey WIN Coordinator; and Employment and Training and CETA experts from the U.S. Department of Labor provided information about their programs and answered questions.

REGIONS III and IV - Joint Project

Region III (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia)
Regional Administrator - Kathy Riordan
Consultants - West Virginia - Chris Weiss
Virginia - Connie Mahoney

Region IV (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)
Regional Administrator - Gay Cobb
Consultants - Tennessee and Kentucky - June Rostan

Regions III and IV held a joint consultation in the four-State area of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Satellite meetings were held in Big Stone Gap and St. Paul, Virginia; in Hazard and Prestonburg, Kentucky; in Hamlin, Beckley, Fayetteville, and Logan, West Virginia; and in Jacksboro, Kingsport, and Maryville-Alcoa, Tennessee. The number of women at each meeting ranged from 6 to 24.

The joint project was undertaken to focus attention on the problems of Appalachian women. Because four States were involved, with different agencies responsible for services in each State, and because travel is difficult in this isolated mountain area, the format for this consultation was reversed from that used for the other projects. Each satellite meeting included a morning session in which the women met each other, and identified and discussed their problems. In the afternoon sessions, State and local resource persons explained available services and programs and answered

questions. This arrangement provided the women with useful information about their own areas, and permitted a maximum number of women to participate in the resource meetings. Each satellite meeting chose 3 to 7 representatives to speak for them at the central consultation.

The women at each of the Appalachian area meetings emphasized the same problems. They said that economic development in the area is almost entirely geared to the coal industry, in which there have been few opportunities for women. According to these women, the coal companies control almost every aspect of life in the mountains, including the political system, and political patronage controls access to the few available jobs as well as government-sponsored employment and training programs. They said that training which is available to women is for jobs that are not available in the area; that traditional ideas about women's work prevent women from obtaining jobs that pay well; that women who work in factories are often exploited by employers; and that many women work for low wages in unhealthful and sometimes hazardous conditions. The women at the meetings agreed that transportation and child care facilities are necessary for mountain women to work.

The Appalachian women felt that the lack of information about programs and services and about their legal rights was a major barrier for them. Many were particularly interested in information about how to start a home-based craft business and how to go about marketing their products.

The central consultation, which was held in Johnson City, Tennessee, on August 27 and 28, 1977, consisted primarily of women representatives from the satellite meetings. Twenty-eight women from Virginia and West Virginia and 13 from Kentucky and Tennessee attended the consultation along with the local consultants, Women's Bureau staff, and several resource persons. The consultation included workshops on Child Care, Women's Resource Centers, Employment Counseling, CETA/WIN and Other Training Programs, and Women's Role in the Workforce in Appalachia. Workshop participants formulated recommendations for local action and for presentation at the National Seminar.

REGION IV
Consultants - Brenda M. Moton
Consuela Harper

In addition to the joint regional meeting held with Region III a second consultation was undertaken in Montgomery, Alabama, and the nearby counties of Macon, Bullock, Lowdnes,

and Elmore. Satellite meetings were held in Shorter, Hardeway, Tuskegee, Pratteville, Chisolm, Young Forte, and Montgomery. This consultation was held to reach rural women in the deep South. About 90 percent of the participants were black. The two consultants worked with a 12 member task force which helped organize the central consultation and assisted in planning the satellite meetings.

About 140 women participated in the Montgomery project. The principal concerns of the Alabama women were: affordable day care for both children and the elderly, medical services, legal aid, welfare assistance during the transition from welfare to work, and strengthening of national, State, and local programs that open jobs in private industry, particularly opportunities in apprenticeship and other training.

The central consultation was held on June 23, 1977, and was attended by more than 90 persons, about one-third of whom were low-income women. Other participants included representatives from State, city, and county government agencies and private organizations in the Montgomery area, who explained their programs and services and answered questions. Alabama Governor George Wallace addressed the meeting, and his support contributed to its success. The consultation participants voted to send a mailgram to President Carter expressing their concerns and recommendations to him on issues they had identified as priority concerns of low-income women.

REGION V (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)
Regional Administrator - Eileen Schaeffler
Consultant - Joyce Dietrich

The Region V project was conducted in the rural area of Cleremont and Brown Counties in Ohio. Satellite meetings were held in Batavia (4), Bethel, Felicity, Middleboro, Georgetown, Ripley, and St. Martin. This area of Ohio is historically and culturally linked with the Appalachian region. The population is widely scattered in rural areas and small towns and villages. Transportation is a real problem because of poor roads and long distances between population centers. There is high unemployment throughout the two counties. In fact, two-thirds of the workers in Brown County and seven-tenths of the workers in Cleremont County are employed outside the counties. The Women's Bureau regional administrator and the local consultant worked closely with a task force composed of representatives of government agencies and women's organizations and the conveners of the satellite meetings.

About 58 women from 17 towns and villages participated in the satellite meetings. Among the particular concerns of women in this area were: access to jobs; employment counseling and training; enforcement of antidiscrimination laws; assistance in developing in-home industries and marketing outlets; and services targeted to rural areas, such as transportation, day care, and community outreach and service programs.

About 40 persons attended the central consultation which was held in Batavia, Ohio, on June 15 and 16th, 1977. Twenty-three were low-income women. The consultation was divided in two sections. The women held an evening caucus on the 15th to meet each other, report on the recommendations from the satellite meetings, and to elect a spokesperson for the next day. The women reported on their needs and recommendations in the morning session on the 16th and the community and agency resource people explained their programs and services and answered questions. The participants then divided into three workshops on Jobs/Training, Existing Services, and Other Supportive Services. A task force of 5 low-income women and 4 community resource people was formed to find ways to implement the recommendations that came out of the meeting. It was felt that there is particular need for followup in this Appalachian area because there are few available mechanisms for women to meet and share information. In fact, one of the significant accomplishments of this consultation was that it brought women together who were from different racial and cultural backgrounds, and who live in isolated groups, and gave them an opportunity to meet and learn that many of their problems are similar.

REGION VI (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)
Regional Administrator - Rhobia Taylor
Consultants: Houston - Yolanda Navarro
Mary Allen
Baton Rouge - Marian Simien

Two consultations were held in Region VI. The first consultation was held in Houston, Texas. Nine satellite meetings were held at selected sites within the city. These were Northside, Magnolia, Denver Harbor, Acres Homes, Sunnyside, Allen Parkway, Second Ward, Third Ward, and Fifth Ward. A task force of representatives of public and private agencies and low-income women worked closely with the local consultant in planning the meetings. Most of the approximately 75 women who participated in the meetings were very close to the subsistence level economically, and most were heads of households, either separated, divorced, or never

married. About 50 percent were Spanish-speaking women who were particularly concerned about the language barrier which prevents them from taking full advantage of services available in the city. Many of the women had low educational attainment levels, and few had marketable skills. Among the generally expressed needs were: 24-hour child care facilities, transportation, particularly to the large jobsites outside the city, training that is geared to local labor market demands, assistance with the transition from welfare to labor force participation, and information about local programs and services.

About 50 persons attended the central consultation which was held on May 13 and 14, 1977, including about 15 low-income women, local task force members, and representatives from government and community agencies. The women representatives reported on the recommendations from the satellite meetings and heard presentations from key agency staff persons, including CETA, WIN, the Texas Employment Commission, Community Services Administration, and the City of Houston. A task force of low-income women and community resource people was formed to work on specific projects to address the needs that had been identified.

The second Region VI consultation site was Opelousas, Louisiana. Satellite meetings were held in Eunice, Sunset, Cankton, Palmetto-Lebeau, Morrow, Melville, Port Barre, Washington-Plaisance, Lawtell and Opelousas. This project was cosponsored by the Louisiana Women's Bureau in Baton Rouge. A large (30 members) and very active task force helped plan and implement both the satellite meetings and the central consultation. Opelousas was chosen because it is a rural area with limited industrial development, and high levels of unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy.

Approximately 150 women were involved in the satellite meetings. The principal issues raised by the women were: race and sex discrimination, favoritism in local government hiring, lack of child care facilities, training and education opportunities, public transportation, and information about services, programs, and jobs. Issues related to public housing and inadequate welfare allowances were also a source of concern.

The central consultation was held on May 20, 1978. About 120 persons attended including about 86 low-income women. Five representatives of the satellite meetings presented reports from their geographical areas, and presentations were made by representatives of the Office of Family Services, Employment Security, HUD, Louisiana Department of Education, and the Office of Civil Rights. In the afternoon

session, workshops were held on Family Services, Education, Employment, Housing, and Working Women, in which issues were discussed and recommendations were made. Many of the recommendations which came out of this meeting were specific and were directed to local agencies, and plans were made for implementation at the workshop.

REGION VII (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)
Regional Administrator - Euphesenia Foster
Consultant - Mary Elizabeth Johnson

The project area for the Region VII consultation was Omaha, Nebraska, and the surrounding counties of Douglas, Lincoln, Grand Island, and Hall. Satellite meetings were held in Blair, Nebraska City, North Omaha, South Omaha, Valley, and Waterloo. Omaha is a midwestern metropolitan area with most of the resources which facilitate the entrance of women into the labor force, including counseling, education, and training programs. There are three universities, a community college, several technical schools, and a medical school.

About 50 women participated in the satellite meetings. The overwhelming concern of the majority of women was their need for information about programs and services that are available in the Omaha area, a central clearinghouse of information and referral, and a support system to reinforce and recognize women's efforts to attain self-sufficiency.

The central consultation was held in Omaha on July 20, 1977. Approximately 65 persons attended, including 35 low-income women. The women's caucus met in the morning session and heard the reports from the satellite meetings. This caucus called for the establishment of a Women's Employment Center where the needs that had been identified could be met.

In the afternoon session, a panel of representatives from the Nebraska Department of Labor, the Welfare Department, AFL-CIO, Omaha CETA, and the Nebraska Equal Employment Opportunity Office explained their programs and services, and answered questions. The meeting divided into seven work groups on CETA, Welfare, Employment Opportunities Commission, Training/Financial Aid, Job Services/WIN, Labor Unions/Industry, and Women's Advocate Groups. These work groups consisted of both low-income women and agency representatives who worked together on solutions to specific problems and needs. Many agencies and organizations promised their support in establishing a Women's Employment Center in Omaha.

REGION VIII (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)
Regional Administrator - Lynn Brown
Consultant - Constance Shaw

The Region VIII consultation area was the State of Colorado. Satellite meetings were held in Durango, Ft. Collins, Grand Junction, Ignacio, and Pueblo. Most of these Colorado cities have large Hispanic populations, some of which experience friction with the Anglo community. Native Americans were also represented at satellite meetings, reflecting some of the concerns of American Indian women. The Denver meeting focused attention on some of the urban problems in the State, while Durango highlighted the many difficulties encountered by women in areas that are severely economically depressed.

About 100 women participated in the satellite meetings. Most of them wanted essentially the same things: transportation, child care facilities, vocational and technical training, jobs, instruction in processing discrimination complaints, better communication between agencies, more accountability from agencies, and an opportunity to become contributing members of the community.

The central consultation was held in Pueblo on April 22 and 23, 1977. A total of 51 participants, 23 of whom were low-income women attended the consultation. The consultation began with an afternoon session which included a summary of the recommendations from the satellite meetings, and which provided information on getting credit, starting a small business, finding jobs, and assessing job interest. There was also a session on sources of assistance, such as day care, welfare, legal aid, and other services. A caucus in the evening refined the recommendations which were to be presented at the National Seminar in Washington, D.C. The second day's activities included presentations from agency representatives on cutting red tape and getting agency assistance and services, as well as information about existing and pending legislation that can affect women, minorities, and women heads of households. The final session was devoted to starting and using networks and resource systems. A network of agency representatives and low-income women was formed to work on getting information to Colorado women about agency services.

REGION IX (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada)
Regional Administrator - Madeline Mixer
Consultant - Fresno - Josephine Mena
Las Vegas - Ruby Duncan

In Region IX the principal project site was Fresno, California. A separate Low-Income Women's Workshop was held in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Fresno area satellite meetings were held in Firebaugh, Fresno, Madera, and Selma. Fresno is in the heart of the San Juaquin Valley and is dominated by agribusiness. It has a heavy concentration of Mexican Americans, and most of the available work is in farming.

About 45 women attended the satellite meetings. They were primarily concerned about the lack of jobs in the area, and they felt that discrimination against Mexican Americans serves to limit the few available jobs to Anglo citizens. In the cities of Madera, Fresno, and Selma, the principal problems identified by the women were: the language barrier in education, vocational training and employment; training that is inadequate, not job related and, for women, limited to traditionally female jobs; and the requirement for work experience in employment and refusal to accept training as experience.

About 60 persons attended the central consultation which was held in Fresno on February 26, 1977, including 34 low-income women and 19 agency representatives. Recommendations were made concerning the need for a women's center, child care, transportation, illegal aliens, the need for industry in rural areas, and training for employment.

In addition to the Fresno consultation, a Low-Income Women's Workshop was held in Las Vegas, Nevada, on February 23, 1977. The workshop brought about 72 agency representatives, community resource people and low-income women together to work on developing a plan for local action. Thirty-one women met in a 2-hour session to discuss difficulties related to employment before meeting again with the agency staff persons. The women who attended this meeting were primarily concerned about welfare reform, child care services, and inadequacies in government-sponsored programs. They also wanted training programs which provided experience and references as well as skills.

REGION X (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)
Regional Administrator - Lazelle Johnson
Consultant - Lilly Aguilar

The Region X project site was Yakima County, Washington. Satellite meetings were held in Sunnyside, Toppenish, and Yakima. The Yakima area is largely agricultural, with a mixed population of Caucasians, Mexican Americans, American Indians, blacks, and Asian Americans. There is also a large migrant population during the harvest season. Yakima

County has the highest rate of unemployment in the State, the highest food stamp allotment, the highest percentage of persons below the poverty level, and the second highest rate of female heads of households.

Forty-four women participated in the satellite meetings. They were concerned about bilingual, bicultural programs and services, especially in child care facilities; and with discrimination in employment based on race and ethnic group as well as sex. These women thought there was need for women's centers for information and referral and review of existing programs and services to see how women are being served.

The central consultation was held in Yakima on April 1 and 2, 1977. About 50 persons, including 19 low-income women and 17 agency and organization representatives attended the consultation. Participants were divided into three work groups. Each group discussed problems related to discrimination and programs, and one group each addressed Child Care, Education/Life Experience, and Domestic Problems, such as wife abuse, separation, and divorce, husbands' attitudes toward working wives, and difficulties in handling home as well as work responsibilities.

THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON LOW-INCOME WOMEN

The National Seminar was held in Washington, D.C., on November 8 and 9, 1977. It consisted of a White House meeting at which the women had an opportunity to speak to Administration officials about their needs, and a Training Workshop at which the women learned more about how Federal programs operate. Participants in the Seminar included 16 low-income consultation representatives, the local consultants for each project, Women's Bureau regional administrators, Women's Bureau national office staff and representatives from Federal agencies with programs that affect low-income women.

The White House meeting was held to draw attention, at the National level, to the needs of low-income women, and to provide the consultation representatives an opportunity to speak directly to the administrators responsible for the programs that affect the lives of low-income women across the country. A reception and work session was held the evening before the White House meeting at which four women were chosen to voice the concerns of the group on four major issues: transportation, the welfare system, child care, and discrimination.

At the White House meeting, a panel of Administration officials explained their programs and responded to the issues presented. They included Graciela Olivarez, Director, Community Services Administration; Constance Downey, Director, Women's Action Program, HEW; Robert Anderson, Administrator, Comprehensive Employment and Training Programs, U.S. Department of Labor; Joy Simonson, Executive Director, National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs; and Weldon Rougeau, Director, Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, U.S. Department of Labor. Also in attendance was Midge Costanza, Assistant to the President, whose Office of Public Liaison cosponsored the meeting.

Perhaps the most important message these officials gave to the women was to get involved in the political process in their own communities. The bulk of Federal money for most programs now goes to State agencies. This is particularly true of CETA and Community Action Agencies which have been instructed to become advocates for low-income women. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare also disburses a large amount of money to States for local programs. The

best way to insure that the funds will be used for programs to benefit and assist women is for women to organize and work together to influence and change the political patterns in their communities. Women have to become a political power group in order to receive their share of dollars for programs, according to the Administrators who spoke at the White House meeting.

At the Training Workshop, Women's Bureau and other Federal agency staff provided information and answered questions on several issues of concern to the women: CETA programs, Welfare Reform, Apprenticeship and nontraditional jobs, and Youth programs.

A National Coalition of Low-Income Women Steering Committee was formed under the leadership of Lilly Aguilar of Sunnyside, Washington. The purpose of this coalition was to organize women for action to upgrade their employment status.

LOW-INCOME WOMEN AND THEIR VIEWS

One of the primary objectives of the Employment and Economic Issues of Low-Income Women project was to reach low-income women and find out how they think government programs can assist them in their efforts to become self-sufficient. The target group--low-income persons who are women--predetermined to some extent a negative view of how those programs are currently serving the public.

In selecting the project sites, the Women's Bureau tried to choose locations which would result in an overview of the widely varied cross-section of women who live in poverty. Thus, consultations in Johnson City, Tennessee; Batavia, Ohio; and Pueblo, Colorado, reflected the difficulties encountered in rural mountain areas. Montgomery, Alabama, and Opelousas, Louisiana, focused attention on the rural deep South, while the Fresno and Yakima consultations drew recommendations from heavily agricultural areas. Newark, New Jersey, Las Vegas, Nevada, and Houston, Texas, highlighted problems of urban poor women. The special problems of Appalachian women were identified at the Johnson City and Batavia consultations. Some of the particular problems of Spanish-speaking women emerged at the meetings in Newark, Houston, Pueblo, Fresno, and Yakima. American Indian women were represented at the meetings in Yakima and Pueblo, and Asian Americans in Yakima, while black women were well represented at all of the regional consultations.

More than 1,000 women participated in the project. Some were welfare recipients or were employed in low paying jobs, while others were married to husbands with low incomes. All had low-incomes, usually below the poverty level. Although most of the women who participated were between 18 and 40 years old, there were a sizeable number of older women who contributed to the overall picture of women in poverty, and focused attention on the special difficulties encountered with age discrimination.

The actual employment and economic issues identified had no geographical boundries. Women in every part of the country are apparently concerned about the same needs and problems. The basic issues related to employment, welfare, and discrimination affect women in Providence as they do in Montgomery, Las Vegas, and Yakima. In each satellite meeting the women were encouraged to speak out openly about their

problems, and about programs, and how they felt they were working, or not working, and what they thought was needed. The following sections are the low-income women project participants' own assessment of their needs and problems.

Information

The need that emerged as a priority issue at almost every meeting was lack of information. Women all over the country felt they needed more information about jobs, training, counseling services, health and social services, welfare, child care, housing, legal rights, and even about each other and their common problems. At most consultations the women recommended action to establish community-based women's resource centers for information and referral which could advise women about the availability of services and programs in the community. In several areas, a task force or committee was formed to work on establishing local networks or resource referral systems or centers. It was also suggested that counseling on proper attire for interviews and working, assertiveness training, and interviewing and resume writing skills be provided to women job seekers, and that classes on budgeting be made available to low-income women.

Employment

Employment related issues were also of primary concern at all consultation and satellite meetings. Discussions centered on CETA and WIN programs, training, experience, discrimination, and child care. CETA and WIN programs drew a great deal of criticism from women in all parts of the country. They said that CETA and WIN training programs are not serving them well, and are not doing a good job in helping people become self-supporting and self-reliant. They also felt that WIN staff are not sensitive to their needs and the difficulties with which low-income women must cope.

Among the most frequently voiced complaints were those related to training. The women felt that training is often inadequate, too short to allow enrollees to learn good skills, and unrelated to the job market. A number of women said they had been through several training programs, all for jobs which turned out to be short term, or were not available in their communities. Another complaint was that women are directed, and sometimes even forced, into training for low paying, dead end jobs in traditional women's occupations in clerical and service fields. Some women said they wanted access to nontraditional skilled jobs that would not only pay better wages, but would offer some opportunity for advancement. The women also thought training programs should be followed by placement. They said there

was little if any follow-through on referrals to employers, which would be helpful. Another source of concern was the fact that many employers require experience, and do not count training as experience. It was felt that training programs should include actual work experience that could be used for references and would count as experience on the job. The women also said that frequently training was not training for a skilled job, but an opportunity for an employer to get someone to do menial work for a low wage.

There were also complaints about the "revolving door" aspect of CETA public service jobs. As one woman put it, "Why should any non-profit organization pick up a former CETA worker, when all they have to do is wait a week and get a new one?" The women also objected to the fact that most Federal training programs are directed to heads of households, and that current definitions make that person a man if there is one around, thus reducing the possibilities for training and employment for many women who need jobs but are not "heads of households."

Child care was another high priority employment-related issue. Many women felt that lack of adequate child care facilities was a major barrier to getting a job. They said they needed child care services that were near their homes or easily accessible and affordable. In addition, the women said child care had to be available on a 7-day, 24-hour basis to accommodate women who must work overtime, at night, on weekends, or on swing shifts. A number of women said they could not take jobs that are available to them because they do not have a reliable place to leave their children while they work. They recommended that Federal funds be allocated for free child care centers including after school and infant care, and that subsidies be granted to women who work for low wages and cannot afford to pay much for child care.

Discrimination

In most regions women also felt that discrimination based on sex, race, and age affected their employment opportunities. In some cases they said that equal pay laws were subverted by giving the same jobs different names and paying women less than men were paid for the same work. Black and Hispanic women felt they were discriminated against because of their race and language. Women everywhere felt they were discriminated against because they were women, particularly in terms of limited or no access to nontraditional jobs and training. Some said they were not hired for nontraditional jobs for which they had already been trained. Age discrimination was also a cause for concern among women who were 40 years of age and older.

Women at most consultations recommended that antidiscrimination laws be enforced more strictly, and that enforcement agencies be given more staff for this purpose. Many also thought it would be helpful if they had more information about their rights, and about how to proceed in filing a complaint.

Welfare

The third major area of discussion was the welfare system. The greatest complaint was that welfare office staff were insensitive and sometimes even hostile to welfare recipients. The women thought that welfare workers tried to "punish" welfare dependents to make them "pay" for their dependency by degrading them or controlling them. They recommended that welfare agencies give in-service training to staff to prevent the humiliating practices to which women are subjected in their contacts with service agencies.

Many women said that welfare benefits were inadequate to meet their needs. They also felt that benefits should be uniform, and that a national welfare system should be implemented. They thought that welfare social workers should inform women about all their rights and options under the system in their State or city. For example, in some cases a woman can receive public assistance while she is going to college or receiving specialized skill training that will lead to a good job, but most women do not know that this option exists or how to take advantage of it. In addition, welfare recipients often are eligible for increases in assistance benefits or their food stamp allotments, but are not informed about the changes. These problems are, of course, compounded when the women cannot speak English well and there is no bilingual staff at the welfare agency.

Women who participated in the consultations also felt that some transition assistance should be provided to ease the move from welfare to self-supporting employment. Medicaid, child care, and other benefits are withdrawn as soon as a woman gets a job, and most jobs available to low-income women do not pay well enough to cover the costs of medical insurance or child care. Women also wanted welfare laws changed to encourage fathers to stay in the home to help keep families together.

Transportation

In almost every area transportation was considered a problem, and in rural areas it was a major issue. Lack of transportation not only seriously affects women's options

in terms of employment, it also makes it difficult to participate in education and training programs and to take advantage of health and social services and other resources that might be available in the community. Women recommended that transportation be provided by State and local governments for rural areas, particularly to job and training sites.

Language

Spanish-speaking women felt that their inability to speak English well was a serious barrier to employment and to obtaining information about available services. They felt that English should not be required by employers for jobs in which it was not necessary, and that information and materials printed by public agencies should be available in languages other than English according to the needs of the community. They also felt that bilingual personnel should be available in public agencies to assist women with language barriers. They recommended expanded English-as-a-second-language programs,and bilingual training programs and child care facilities.

Health

Some of the women who participated in the project felt that lack of adequate health care facilities was a cause of health problems, and subsequently affected their ability to take jobs.

Many thought that a substitute for Medicaid, perhaps a national health insurance plan, should be established so women would not lose health benefits by taking a job with minimum pay.

Housing

In several consultations women raised the issue of public housing. They felt that more low-income housing should be developed, and priority should be given to female heads of households with children, and to persons who need it most.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES

Through the Employment and Economic Issues of Low-Income Women project the Women's Bureau was able to obtain first-hand information about the problems low-income women encounter in seeking employment and in trying to become self-sufficient. The meetings also confirmed the validity of the issues the Bureau had already raised as part of its overall efforts to improve the status, options, and opportunities of working women. This information was useful to the Bureau in its work on the Administration's Welfare Reform Proposal and the Employment and Training Administration's proposed CETA Reauthorization legislation.

The project was also effective in bringing groups of low-income women together with representatives of agencies with programs that provide services on the local level. In many of the consultation cities, committees, task forces, or coalitions were formed by low-income women and representatives of organizations and service agencies. In addition, a number of agency staff persons were sensitized to the problems and needs of their low-income clients.

However, although the project did generate interest and enthusiasm among women, it also raised expectations for action and improvement. Since no money had been provided for followup there was cause for concern that the interest that had been stimulated would abate, and an opportunity for grassroots action to improve services to women would be lost. Fortunately, the Women's Bureau obtained another grant from the Employment and Training Administration to fund a second, followup phase. These activities took a variety of forms, depending on the interests and needs of the women in each project area, the cooperation and assistance of agency and organization people in the community, and the kinds of services already available in the area.

In most project sites, the local consultant was funded to organize, coordinate, or stimulate followup activities. This included holding meetings to report back on the National Seminar, and working with local groups of low-income women and other consultation participants who had formed networks, committees, or coalitions to work on specific issues. In many communities the task force which assisted in planning the meetings continued to meet, and in some cases this group incorporated to seek funding for

proposals and to work in other ways on women's issues. Other groups which were formed at the central consultations, or in some cases at satellite meetings, formalized their existence, and some of these also incorporated. Many of these organizations have written and submitted proposals for training seminars, women's resource centers, and studies of women's issues such as child care, welfare, employment and training, and battered women, which have been submitted to local and Federal funding sources as well as private foundations.

Women in several communities are working on guides or resource books for women in the area which provide information about education, training, jobs, health care, housing, welfare, child care, legal assistance and other available services. Training sessions to teach women their job rights, employment opportunities and options, and the availability of services have also been conducted in several project areas.

Some of the most interesting activities that have come about as a result of this project include:

--- a mobile women's resource center that will take information about education, training, employment, legal rights, and other subjects, to women in mountainous regions of Eastern Kentucky, Southwestern Virginia, Eastern Tennessee, and Southern West Virginia.

--- a guide for holding low-income women's conferences or meetings in towns and cities all over the State of Nebraska, geared specifically to the resources and needs of Nebraska women.

--- funding of an Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) in Montgomery, Alabama, to provide nontraditional jobs for low-income women in the area.

--- an Employment and Training Administration funded contract for a handbook, "Getting What You Need: A Handbook of Services for Low-Income Women in Massachusetts."

--- establishment or expansion of resource centers and resource networks for women in Newark, New Jersey; Providence and Newport, Rhode Island; Omaha, Nebraska; New Bedford, Massachusetts; and several other sites.

Perhaps the most significant result of this project has been the degree to which low-income women, local task force members, and agency and community organization members have become involved in organizations and activities to

help women. This involvement is important because most of the needs of women must be met at the local level, and therefore local action is essential to any effort to improve services and programs. Wherever low-income women have met each other and other community members, aired problems, exchanged views, learned about programs and services, and joined together to work for change in their own communities, the objectives of this project have been fulfilled.

APPENDIX A

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